

## **I-90 Two-way Transit and HOV Project**

### **BRIEFING PAPER**

Prepared for the

September 2004 TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING

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Approved by: Paula J. Hammond, Chief of Staff

### **PURPOSE:**

This briefing will update the Commission about milestones reached in the process for approval of the project by the parties to the I-90 1976 Memorandum Agreement (MA).

### **ACTION/OUTCOME:**

The Commission will be asked to adopt a resolution approving the project and authorizing execution of an amendment to the 1976 MA.

### **BACKGROUND:**

The I-90 project is an element of Sound Transit's 1996 *Sound Move* plan for constructing transit improvements and will add HOV lanes on the outer roadways to complete the HOV system between Seattle and Bellevue. The project is the first step in the vision to operate high capacity transit (HCT) exclusively in the center roadway and the permanent relocation of all vehicle traffic to the outer roadways. The ultimate project that will implement HCT on I-90 would be part of Sound Transit's *Phase 2* plan that must be approved by the voters before design and construction proceed. Sound Transit has already begun updating its current Vision to include *Phase 2* plans and it is expected that the Sound Transit board will adopt the Vision and plan in spring 05.

Before proceeding with the project beyond the environmental phase and preparation of the design file, Sound Transit and the parties to the MA (cities of Seattle, Mercer Island and Bellevue, King County, and WSDOT) agreed that certain principles about further development of transit operations on I-90 between Seattle and Bellevue should be included in an amendment to the MA. It was also agreed that Sound Transit should be added as a party to the amendment because of its authority over regional transportation projects. Essentially, the principles state that the current project is the first step toward the exclusive HCT operation in the I-90 center roadway. Because construction of HCT will relocate all Mercer Island traffic from the center roadway to the outer roadways, the amendment also states that prior to construction of HCT measures will be taken to mitigate this effect on Mercer Island traffic. The proposed amendment largely confirms principles that the department has already agreed to in the MA.

**DISCUSSION:**Update on Approval Actions

It is expected that all of the parties to the 1976 MA and the Sound Transit Board will have taken action to approve the project by the date of the September Commission meeting. The city councils of the cities of Bellevue and Mercer Island, the King County Council, and the Sound Transit Board have all approved the project and the amendment to the 1976 MA. The Seattle City Council is expected to take action on September 13.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the Commission approve the resolution approving the project and authorizing execution of the amendment.

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